

From the Author the
Rev^d Francis Leighton

George III King Bell Birthday & Long-Tudatory Poem

J. Plymley Long

THANKSGIVING

4461 i 22

FOR THE

KING's RECOVERY, 1789.

GENESIS XV. 16.

"For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

THE idea of a particular providence is at this day almost universally ridiculed and exploded: by many perhaps unheard of. That God should interest himself in the affairs of men, that he should watch over the conduct of individuals, or attend even to the fate of kingdoms, and judge between nation and nation, seems so ludicrous in this freethinking age, that he who should hazard such an assertion would hardly escape the imputation of fanaticism.

The opposite doctrine, that the DEITY sits careleſs on the circle of the heavens, unconscious how the course of this lower world is ordered, and regardleſs whether men be holy or wicked, happy or miserable, was ſo much more agreeable to the natural inclinations of mankind, that the

A

Grecian

Grecian who first propagated it was dignified with the name of a philosopher, and became the founder of a flourishing sect. Yet we find that the same delusion was equally prevalent many ages before him, with those who had an interest in professing to believe it: for the Psalmist informs us that there were men in his days who broke in pieces the people of the LORD and afflicted his heritage, who slew the widow and murdered the fatherless, and yet said "the LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard." Nay the same delusion makes equal ravages at this day among men, who far from having any pretension to philosophy, may say of it, as the Ephesians of the HOLY SPIRIT, "we have not so much as heard whether there be any such thing." Such philosophy, in fact, is founded on a dread of reasoning or thinking at all; and it is the favourite creed (because it is the natural wish) of every wicked and corrupt heart.

But in this place at least we may venture to profess some reverence for those sacred oracles which ought to be the standard of our faith, and to maintain upon their authority that the Judge of the earth doth behold with an impartial eye the actions of his intelligent creatures; that the economy of this world is under his immediate controul; that *his judgments are in the earth that her inhabitants may learn righteousness*; and that national calamities are scourges in his hand to chastise national impieties and immoralities.

Nay even those who reject as superstitious the idea of divine interposition in human affairs will allow,

allow, if they have read and reflected at all, that both reason and experience argue the virtue of the individuals who compose a nation to be the best security for its prosperity, and their vice the infallible cause of its decay and ruin; that when these have been the most punctual and scrupulous in the observance of private and social duties, they have also been most eminent for ability and fidelity in the discharge of public offices; and that when their collective virtues rose to the highest pitch, they were at that juncture as a state most glorious, the most powerful, and the most happy: that as soon as public prosperity and opulence begin to introduce luxury, pride, effeminacy and relaxation of morals, their glory must begin to fade and their strength to decline: that Government (for the upright administration of which there is no security but in the integrity of the governors) must in most of its departments be perverted and corrupted: that the causes of the general disorder must increase with its effects: and that nothing but a timely return to its primitive virtue can avert or even suspend the destruction of the state.

If therefore we should even waive the doctrine of the personal and occasional interposition of omnipotence in national concerns, what a trophy does this review of history afford to the glory of divine wisdom? How providently hath God consulted the honor of his laws, and the sure execution of his will! How indubitable a testimony doth he give of his approbation of

moral rectitude, by making national honour and welfare its inseparable attendants; and how infallible a proof of his detestation of vice, by making it in states and kingdoms, as well as in individuals, the very seed and principle of dissolution!

From these truths, which, as being self evident, neither the libertine nor the infidel attempts to controvert, humble and candid minds, even among the unenlightened heathen have been led to attribute every great and sudden national disaster, the ruin of independent states, and the fall of mighty empires to the just displeasure of the moral Governor of the universe. And this conclusion is warranted by the express declaration of scripture, and exemplified in many tremendous recitals pointedly applied to the confirmation of this doctrine, throughout the historical books of the Old Testament.

We learn further from these awful passages that GOD is patient, long-suffering and slow to anger: that he usually warns and threatens long before he smites: that after the thunderbolt is grasped, and even uplifted for the fatal stroke, he grants a season for repentance, proclaiming as it were, "*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,*" and pleading with the guilty nation, "*Oh that thou wouldest see, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, before they be hid from thine eyes!*"

Of this gracious suspension of divine vengeance some nations have happily availed themselves to their

their preservation, like the Ninevites lately alluded to, by turning from their evil ways. Others unawed by the loud voice of general misfortune, and unmoved by the forbearance of God, have hardened their hearts against repentance, until his patience has been exhausted, and his wrath, long restrained, has burst in a fuller tempest on their devoted heads.

Thus Sodom and Gomorrah, unedified by the example and admonitions of Lot, unawakened by subjection to their powerful neighbours, and by their total defeat when they rose in rebellion against them, and insensible of the divine mercy extended to them in their deliverance from the yoke of their conquerors by the hand of Abraham, obdurately persisted in their horrible crimes, till in the words of St. Jude *they were set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

Thus on the peculiarly favoured people of the Lord his blessings and his chastisements were alternately bestowed in vain. Often had they smarted under every scourge by which offended heaven corrects the crying sins of nations, war, earthquake, famine, pestilence, slavery, exile and captivity. As often had they experienced God's paternal mercy and readiness to forgive, when *they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.* Yet having for ages stretched forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people, and being at length provoked to give them up to the consequences of their incorrigible wickedness, *he caused them to perish utterly from off the land*

land of promise, he scattered them among the nations; and left them few in number among the heathen.

This too was remarkably the case of the people of whom our text speaks. By Amorites in some places are to be understood the peculiar descendants of Emmor the fourth son of Canaan. These inhabited the mountains to the west of the Dead Sea, until having expelled the Moabites and Ammonites they extended their frontier far beyond its eastern shore. Sehon and Og, two kings of these Amorites, were defeated and slain by Moses. But in the text, and in some other passages, the name of Amorites assumes a more extended signification, and must be understood as including all the nations who inhabited the land of Canaan, among whom these Amorites were the chief; by the same figure by which Ephraim is frequently put for the whole kingdom of Israel.

These nations, at the time of their first settlement in the holy land, must have learned from the antediluvian patriarchs the pure and genuine worship of the true God: which worship, however, they seem very early to have deserted for the grossest and most horrible idolatry. It is probable that their abominations at first received some check from the reproaches of their consciences, from the traditional remains of the true religion, from the exhortations of Abraham and his descendants, who frequently and long resided in their country, and perhaps from some judicial visitations of providence, of which, however

ever, no monuments are preserved in the sacred history. But it appears by the context, that God allowed them a long space for repentance; and by the subsequent history of this people we learn that they so notoriously abused the indulgence of heaven, that their utter extirpation was at length resolved on, and finally executed in a most exemplary and alarming manner.

God allowed them a long space for repentance. His *long-suffering waited as in the days of Noah*, until the scheme which he had planned for the vindication of his holiness and his justice should be fully matured: and in this dreadful interval, although the event was foreseen, and the consequence completely adjusted and ordered in the divine council, he pronounces the awful declaration *the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

Since then the voice of reason and of history concurs with that of revelation in referring public calamities to the indignation of God, and the suspension of them to his clemency, shall we hesitate to apply these interesting truths to our own actual situation, and to profit by the terrific examples of nations whom we may soon resemble in punishment as strongly as we already resemble them in sin? Our sovereign piously ascribes his late affliction, and his happy restoration to a divine hand. Our prelates have faithfully pointed out to us the true sources of our former distress, and of our present deliverance. It is neither the gloomy apprehension of superstition, nor the wild panic of fanaticism; it

it is the calm and sober dictate of reason and religion, that we are at this moment in the critical situation described in the text. Our sins have long cried for vengeance. We have been repeatedly warned and menaced; and hitherto we have been warned and menaced in vain. The rod has been recently brandished over us. Our time of probation is yet again prolonged: the threatened ruin is yet again suspended, *because our iniquities are not yet full.*

Our sins, I say, have long cried for vengeance. I intend not this discourse as a satirical essay; nor is it my purpose to dwell on the topic which has been so frequently and so fruitlessly insisted on, the profligacy of the present age. That every domestic and social obligation is trodden under foot, that outrage is done to every human law, that daring contempt is poured upon every divine precept and prohibition, is so universally acknowledged, and that with so much apparent unconcern, that it may perhaps with greater propriety be called the boast than the confession of the times. Neither will I agitate at present the trite question whether the manners of the present generation be really more corrupt than those of our ancestors. Upon a deliberate view of the moral and political causes which operate on the characters of nations, reason will decisively pronounce that it must be so: and, by a faithful comparison of the conduct of all orders of society at this day and at any period since the reformation, we shall at once be convinced that it is so. But since, with respect to nations as well as individuals,

individuals, the abuse of the advantages God has accorded to them is at once the cause and the measure of his indignation, let us briefly enquire what use we have made of the peculiar blessing with which providence hath indulged us.

You cannot but perceive that I allude to the blessing of freedom. So universally and so equally is this inestimable gift diffused amongst us, and to such an extent is it enjoyed, that it is admired and envied by other nations as the proper and exclusive birthright of Englishmen: and by the wise (I had almost said the divinely inspired policy of our ancestors) so happily are the various forms of government mingled, so artfully is the legislative tempered and blended with the executive power, so nicely is the authority of the three estates of the nation balanced, and so fortunately their clashing prerogatives and privileges reconciled and adjusted, that nothing within the compass of human foresight, except our mad abuse of the benefits of this excellent constitution, can at any time bereave us of the liberty we boast.

Our religious liberty, which is infinitely more important, is not less universal or extensive, nor less firmly secured. So sacred in the eye of the law is freedom of conscience, that not only our brethren who dissent from us on the subject of Church-discipline, and other external and non-essential points, but even they whose religious opinions our Church condemns as impious and heretical, are secured from persecution by the glorious act of toleration. But more: We have

the Bible in our hands: and the faith which is grounded on its sacred authority, and which embraces its peculiar and distinguishing doctrines, is not merely tolerated; it is the creed of the Church of England. The symbols and formularies which make the standard of our national faith are founded on the EVERLASTING GOSPEL: this faith is the great object of the protection of our laws. The test act is its great outward bulwark: and, however it may be misrepresented by disfatisified sectaries, the spirit of this law is certainly not penal or coercive: nay it is eventually productive of very valuable privileges and immunities to Dissenters: it is only restrictive: it militates not against the religious liberty of any man; but it secures the church against the power of her enemies by excluding them from civil offices

But liberty, both civil and religious, which they only who want it know how to prize, we have, in the language of St. Peter, *used for a cloke of maliciousness.* The abuse of our political freedom appears too plainly, in the prevailing contempt of government, in the insolence of faction, in the reviling of dignities, and above all in the execrable presumption of those who have dared, like Shimei, to mock and insult the heaven-inflicted misfortunes of their Sovereign.

And has the precious talent of religious liberty been more faithfully and conscientiously improved? Rational and dispassionate discussions of the rectitude and propriety of the established mode

mode of worship our laws most liberally permit : but the audacity of Schismatics has instigated them to revile and ridicule our ordinances and our liturgy. Nor has their arrogance stopped here : in the pulpit and from the pres^s they have openly avowed their disbelief and contempt of *the record which GOD hath given of his SON.* They have treated with scorn and contumely those who confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD to the glory of GOD the FATHER. Every dogma of scripture which tends to exalt the SAVIOUR, and to debase the sinner—which sets forth the guilt, the misery, the helplessness of man, and the impotency of reason to attain a saving knowledge of GOD ; which declares the glory of the offices or of the person of CHRIST, his unity and equality with the FATHER, the necessity, the sufficiency, the reality of his atoning sacrifice, the salvation of sinners by grace through faith in his blood, the prevalence of his intercession, the influences of the SPIRIT whom he sent down after his ascension, is the object of general derision : to the Socinian a stumbling block, and to the Deist foolishness. The REDEEMER is stripped of every honor, those only excepted with which the very disciples of Mahomet are content to invest him. He is reduced to a mere prophet, a teacher and example of righteousness, or at most a divinely commissioned republisher of the religion of nature. Such are the outrages and insults that Christianity suffers ; and that not only from without : she is also treacherously wounded in the house of her friends : for (tell it not in Gath, nor publish it in the streets of Askelon) the familiar friends of our Church, in whom she trusted, have betrayed her, and they that

eat of her bread have lifted up their heels against her. Thus are the streams of virtue and morality poisoned in their very sources: for to this origin will every true Christian trace the corruption of public manners; being convinced that if men *love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST*, they will *not keep his commandments*.

Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Highly favoured as our land hath been, it hath sometimes been alarmed by the prospect of impending judgment. But lately we groaned under the scourge of an unsuccessful war, without friends or assistants: the great powers of Europe entered into strict confederacy with our rebellious colonies: of our antient allies some beheld the unequal and hopeless struggle with an invidious neutrality little less than hostile; others became our open and rancorous enemies. *If the LORD himself had not been on our side, now may England say, If the LORD himself had not been our side when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us: the waters had overwhelmed us, and the stream had gone over our soul.*

Scarce had he, in compassion to our distresses, averted this plague, when we provoked him to set his terrors once more in array against us, and to menace us with one of the most dreadful disasters that can befall a mighty and high-spirited people. “*Wo unto thee, O land,*” saith Solomon, “*when thy king is a child.*” When the hand which should wield the executive power is weak through infancy,

infancy, or through any other incapacity, whether temporary or permanent, all the functions of government are suspended, or involved in confusion almost inextricable: the public interest is wrecked in the conflict of violent and ambitious factions, or in the struggles of the different branches of the legislature for undue and exorbitant authority: then it is that the secret and open enemies of a state triumph in its domestic weakness, and avail themselves of its distracted councils. Such was the gloomy face of providence which lately frowned upon us. A baleful and malignant distemper had well nigh subverted the intellects of our sovereign. That acute and penetrating understanding which had been taught to fathom the depths and to trace the intricacies of dissembling and treacherous policy, to balance the power and to defeat the ambition of mighty states by opposing them to each other, and to baffle the more dangerous efforts of domestic sedition, was threatened with total extinction. Already had the dreadful consequences of this misfortune begun to manifest themselves; and it required all the firmness and vigor of a spirited and upright ministry to preserve the prerogatives of royalty and the rights of the senate from daring and unconstitutional encroachment.

Amidst all the cabals of party and the malevolence of faction, the personal character of our King has always been loved and revered. The most unequivocal proof of this appeared in the general dejection and consternation of his people. Sadness clouded every brow. Private joy was untaasted;

unfeasted; and private grief was lost and forgotten in the public affliction. Dissipation was ashamed to pursue her revels, and flunk away abashed and mortified. "What news of the King?" was the first question in every circle: and the impatient anxiety of the enquirer bespoke him affectionately interested in the answer. The public prints, heretofore the dull refuge of idleness from the burthen of time and reflection, were torn open with an avidity and eagerness of enquiry, which scarce any man had hitherto manifested in his personal concerns; and their contents were anticipated by the surrounding audience from the brightening or the downcast eye of the affected reader.

Fully proportioned to this general sorrow and anxiety, was the joy which overspread—which overpowered the nation on their beloved monarch's recovery. I cannot, I need not describe it. You cannot forget the universal, the unaffected demonstrations of it. It has not yet subsided. It flutters, it swells at this moment in your bosoms. Oh, that it may flow in its proper channel! that it may break forth in songs of gratitude to him by whom *kings reign, and princes decree justice*—with whom are the issues of life and death; who bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up: who repaireth with a word the miserable ruins of human reason! that it may excite you to publish abroad how great things the **LORD** hath done for us; to praise the **LORD** for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men.

Your

Your gratitude will be encreased by a retrospect of the calamity which at present the tender mercy of GOD seems to have averted from you. There is usually a striking relation between the crying sin of a people, and the peculiar scourge which the LORD employs to chastise it. We have seen that the crying sin of this land is contempt of the gospel: and the judgment denounced throughout scripture on such contempt is of all judgments the most dreadful, the utter deprivation of God's despised word: "*Because I have called,*" faith CHRIST, under the name of Wisdom, in the Proverbs, "*and ye have refused, I have stretched forth my hands and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof, therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, they shall be filled with their own devices." "*Behold the days come saith the LORD,*" by the prophet Amos, "*that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the LORD.*"— "*I will come unto thee quickly,*" faith CHRIST to the church of Ephesus, "*and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*" Some of you, perhaps, are not aware that this dreadful judgment was of late probably not very remote from this nation. It is, however, well known that a certain faction has long meditated the repeal of the test act, and the abolition of subscription: if these things had happened, the fences would have been thrown

thrown open to Arians, Socinians, and Pelagians: their secret friends within the bosom of the church, whom shame, fear or interest at present restrain within the bounds of hypocritical profession, would have eagerly joined them, and the faith of the Apostles, founded on scripture, established by councils, and sealed with the blood of thousands of martyrs, would have been exploded, decried, and finally perhaps persecuted throughout this now happy and enlightened country.

These things are in the LORD's hand. Let us rejoice with trembling that this fearful visitation is for the present removed from us. Let us pray that *the evil may not happen in our days*; and that our beloved monarch, so lately restored to the prayers of his faithful and pious subjects, may long be preserved in health of body and mind, to be a defender of the faith, and a *nursing father* to the Church of CHRIST within his kingdoms: that our countrymen may hear the rod, and who hath appointed it; that they may be sensible that the sword so lately uplifted, hangs yet over their heads, until they *repent and turn from the evil of their ways*, or (fearful alternative!) until *the measure of their iniquities be full*: that they may reflect with due seriousness that this awful and critical interval of probation is the *accepted time, the day of salvation*.—And finally, in the words of our church, that it may please God to deliver us from all sedition, privy conspiracy and rebellion, from all false doctrine, heresy and schism, and above all from hardness of heart and contempt of his word and commandment.



From the author. The Rev. J. Chapman.
1792.

[17]

A S S I Z E, 1786.

HOSEA IV. 6.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

THE influence of religious persuasion upon the moral conduct both of individuals and of communities is universally acknowledged. Reason, history, and experience so strongly unite to confirm it, that one of the most inveterate and subtle enemies of revelation which this country ever produced could not withhold his assent to a truth so self-evident. To religion at large he bore this remarkable testimony, "that it is the only effectual curb in the mouth of the wild beast man." He might have added, but it suited not his purpose, that the peculiar religion prevalent in any nation never fails to stamp its own character on the manners of the people who profess it: that where-ever Christianity, for instance, has been embraced, especially in the reformed churches where it has been

C taught

taught in its greatest purity, there the blessings of civil liberty, the refinements of art and science, and the virtues of benevolence and humanity have shed their beneficent influence: while tyranny, ignorance and barbarism are the curse and the disgrace of those nations which still sit in darkness and the shadow of death, in the night of heathen and Mahometan error. If indeed we examine the lives of those who have received the gospel in its true spirit and power, we shall find a difference of character between them and ordinary professors more striking than those great discriminating features which distinguish the Christian from the Pagan world: it is here that the power of religion shines forth in its greatest beauty and glory; but I speak at present of the effects of outward national profession, as universally notorious and undeniable.

If religion be the only certain source and principle of virtue, it follows that in proportion as religious knowledge declines in a nation, vice must abound and increase: and that such declension must be referred to as the original and principal cause of the general depravity. Other causes of a local and political nature may concur; and the timely application of suitable remedies to these may in some degree restrain the progress of the disorder: but scripture and experience warrant us in pronouncing that the root of the evil is the want or the contempt of divine knowledge.

The



The prophet Hosea plainly ascribes to this origin the corruption which pervaded all ranks of men in the kingdom of Israel. *The LORD, faith he, hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of GOD in the land.* By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Then, after denouncing the vengeance of JEHOVAH on these crying enormities, he recurs again to the fatal cause of this degeneracy in the words of the text, *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*

Isaiah, who was contemporary with our prophet, describes more diffusely the same state of morals in the sister kingdom of Judah, and plainly refers the cause to the prevalence of religious error, particularly on the subject of atonement for sin: the Jews relying on their punctual attendance on religious duties to expiate their atrocious offences against the moral law. And even David, who wrote three hundred years earlier, attributes to ignorance and infidelity the progress of presumptuous wickedness in his own days. *The fool hath said in his heart there is no GOD: corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity. GOD looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek GOD: Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy. They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage, they slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless; yet they say the LORD shall not see, neither shall the GOD of Jacob regard.*

It is impossible to read the descriptions which these inspired writers give us of the state of their country, with respect to religion and morals, without adverting to the striking resemblance which they exhibit to the sentiments and manners of our own times. "The characteristic feature of the present age is indifference to religion in general." A fatal maxim bearing the semblance of candor and liberality is universally adopted, that it imports little what a man's religious opinions may be, provided his life may be regulated by principles of integrity and benevolence. He who reflects on the obsequiousness and pliability of human reason, and the facility with which men deceive themselves when the interest of their passions requires that they should be deceived, will scarce wonder that, while this sentiment prevails, each man should adopt that creed which is best calculated to accommodate his inclination and to justify his practice. And indeed, having assumed the privilege of chusing for ourselves a system of religious persuasion, independent on God's revelation, we may with equal propriety assert a right to form our own code of moral and social obligation.

"From this affection of candor," says an elegant writer, "we have sunk into listlessness; and have tamely suffered a daring spirit of infidelity to oppose, and a specious heresy to undermine the interests of Christianity, because we have been apprehensive that our firmness would be branded with the odious name of bigotry." We are at ease in Zion, while the

Deist

Deist assaults her gates with the too successful engines of ridicule and sophistry; and his useful ally the Socinian saps her foundations by the treacherous arts of false interpretation, and under the insidious pretence of reformation,

In the higher ranks of life infidelity spreads its ravages far and wide. Every publication which attacks the system of revealed truth is eagerly sought out and warmly extolled. If written with some specious display of learning and argument, it is pronounced by the veterans in incredulity convincing and unanswerable; if the reasoning be less solid and consistent, with the young and gay a lively conceit or an affected sneer will easily supply the place of sound logic. Every profession of religion in polite circles is laughed out of countenance; and the natural consequence upon our morals is, that it demands more firmness to speak one serious sentence in praise of virtue, than it formerly required of audacity to pronounce the apology or even the panegyric of vice. Offences against the social and relative duties which heretofore were not thought of but with horror are daily related with cool indifference, and the narration is received without surprize or concern. The same perverted notion of liberty which has so long encouraged us to bid defiance to laws and magistrates, has excited us to throw off the restraints of piety and goodness; and so effectually have we emancipated ourselves from their dominion, that at length, in the language of St. Paul, *being the servants of sin we are free from righteousness.*

Fashion,

Fashion, we know, confines not herself to the adjusting of our habits, and the regulating of our ceremonies: her empire is extended over our thoughts, our words, our actions. Even our religion and our morals must be modelled according to the general standard. As all modes originate with the great, and are imitated by their inferiors with circumstances of preposterous exaggeration, so in religious sentiment, and in moral practice, the peasant and the mechanic (to use the language of our most admired poet) "tread on the courtier's heel." If they cannot enter into the nice and subtil discussions of the infidel creed, they have at least some gross idea of its general scope and tendency, and are sufficiently dexterous in applying it to practice: and (as it is customary where the restraints and refinements of education are absent) its influence on the manners of these men, appears in more glaring and disgusting colours. Hence daring and flagitious wickedness stalks abroad with open front, unabashed by order and decency, undismayed by the certainty of punishment. Rapine, violence, and murder no longer skulk in dens, or shelter themselves in darkness; they riot fearless in the center of the capital, and in the face of day. Hence the venerable men, to whom the administration of the law is committed, have been constrained to do violence to their humane and benevolent feelings, and to exhibit justice arrayed in all her terrors: and a stranger, who should superficially observe the number of victims recently sacrificed to the public peace and security, might conclude that our laws, instead of being

being dictated by the very spirit of lenity and mercy, were written like those of Draco in characters of blood.

The infallible word of GOD, in pointing out the cause, directs us to the remedy of this alarming malady. I presume not to conjecture by what expedients the wisdom of those who enact, or of those who administer our laws, will attempt to restrain the overflowings of wickedness, and to provide for the general safety. But if it be *for lack of religious knowledge* that our *people are destroyed*, the priest must concur with the senator and the magistrate in the important work of reformation. Acts of the legislature, by aggravating punishment, or securing its infliction, may restrain, in some degree, the outward actions, but the hearts of men they cannot reach. *Out of the heart*, our blessed SAVIOUR informs us, *proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnessess, blasphemies*: and nothing but his religion can change and purify the heart.

Revelation exhibits to us one and the same method to reform, and to save men. The most enlightened of the heathen, with all their philosophy, were ignorant of GOD; consequently they dishonoured and provoked him by their practice. If like them we content ourselves with declaiming on the beauty and moral fitness of virtue, and with representing vice as full of deformity, as pernicious to the peace of society, and degrading to the dignity of human nature, we must expect no other effect of such instructions

on

on the lives and conversations of our fellow-citizens than they produced on the manners of the licentious Roman and the voluptuous Greek. We should, indeed, insist on every argument against sin, drawn from nature, reason, and experience, to shew that *the law is holy, and the commandment just and good*: but let us not hope to make conscientious Christians in any other way but by teaching them that *the life they live in the flesh they must live by faith in the SON of GOD, who loved them, and gave himself for them.*

The great leading truths of the gospel are of such unspeakable moment, that they ought to be for ever kept in view. Such as the lost condition of man by nature—the necessity of salvation by CHRIST—the satisfaction made by the suffering of the REDEEMER in the sinner's place—free forgiveness through faith in the blood of atonement—the necessity of regeneration, and of the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT to enlighten and sanctify the hearts of his people.

It is only on the ruined state of man by nature that the necessity of salvation by CHRIST is founded. Unless men be convinced that *all have sinned*, unless they be made sensible of the holiness and justice of GOD, in vain will the Gospel be announced as *glad tidings of great joy to all people*. The law then must be preached in its utmost extent, and most refined spirituality; in all the force of its unchangeable obligation, in all the terror of its awful sanctions. *This do, and live. The soul that sinneth it shall die.* GOD must be represented

fended as of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: as a God at once of boundless compassion, and of inexorable justice: as pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin, for the sake of the perfect and sufficient sacrifice made by his Son, yet by no means clearing the guilty, who spurn and neglect this great salvation. To evince the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and its hatefulnes in the sight of God, we must appeal to his judicial dealings with presumptuous sinners even in this life; and to his denunciations of eternal punishment after death. But chiefly we must appeal to that most signal and awful display of his vengeance on Calvary; where all the arrows of his wrath were pointed at one breast, all the phials of his indignation were poured out on one head; where he declared, in the most unequivocal manner, that no sacrifice less precious than the blood of his own co-ternal, co-equal Son, could make satisfaction to the divine justice for sin. For we may with certainty conclude that he who knew no sin would never have been made sin for us; he who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, would never have taken upon him the form of a servant; he who was God over all, blessed for ever, would never have become a curse, if any other method could have been devised consistent with the honor of the divine attributes, if any inferior sacrifice could have appeased the offended justice and holiness of the FATHER.

From the holiness to the mercy of God, or rather to both in conjunction, the views of the sinner must next be directed. He must be taught

that he doth the greatest outrage to both these glorious attributes, if he presume to imagine that his own imperfect righteousness, his alms, his duties, can in any degree merit or purchase his justification in the sight of God. He must be taught that the work of his salvation was finished and compleated on the cross: that he is *justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in JESUS CHRIST, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*—that *by grace we are saved through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works*—that good works, in the language of our church, “follow after justification:”—that every thing that is good in us is the effect of God's grace, and not the condition of his favour: that for a sinner, therefore, to imagine that he must found on his own obedience his title to God's acceptance, is injurious to the riches and the freedom of divine grace, and the way to retard if not to prevent his sanctification.

But the privileges of the Gospel are inseparably connected with its duties. We must preserve inviolable the harmony and dependence which subsists between them. We must not fail frequently and fervently to set forth the influence of truth on moral practice. We must remind men, that *he that abideth in CHRIST, as the branch in the vine, the same bringeth forth much fruit. That sin must not have dominion over them, even because they are not under the law but under grace: that although good works have no part whatever in meriting or purchasing his acceptance with God, yet they are indispensably*

indispensably necessary to every Christian, as the only infallible marks and evidences to himself, and to the world, that his faith is genuine and saving: that the faith which is destitute of these fruits, is dead, spurious, hypocritical. These truths St. Paul constantly exhibits in their proper order and connection, and particularly in the epistle to Titus:—*not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he saved us.* —How?—*by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the HOLY GHOST, which he shed on us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR:*—to which he presently adds, *These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in GOD might be careful to maintain good works.*

These doctrines, so unspeakably momentous, should be clearly explained, and frequently inculcated. They are the doctrines of the reformation: they are the glory of our own evangelical Church, whose foundations are laid in the truth of scripture, and whose walls are cemented with the blood of saints and martyrs. To the Socinian, who openly denies the divinity of our blessed LORD, and by a fatal consequence attempts to overthrow his satisfaction, they are *a stumbling block;* and to the Deist they are *foolishness.* But, what is most astonishing, many, who cannot withhold their assent to them as scriptural truths, yet affect to discourage the preaching of them from an apprehension that they may be abused to the purposes of licentiousness. I know not indeed any truth which is not liable to perversion, or which hath not in some instances been perverted.

But hath CHRIST commanded us to *preach the Gospel to every creature*, and shall the wisdom of man presume to judge of consequences, and arrogantly pronounce it expedient to suppress its glorious truths, to substitute in its room a system of heathen ethics, and reduce the whole of God's revelation to morality and a future state? No; let us lay down the truths of God's word in their due connection and subordination: let us clearly explain, and carefully guard them: let us *preach CHRIST and him crucified, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS*: and if perverse sinners will afterwards *wrest the good word of God, they wrest it to their own destruction.* But neither is this apprehension founded in reason nor in experience. By fair and consistent reasoning, no consequences subversive of morality can possibly be elicited from the doctrines of grace. Never were the manners of the Protestant subjects of this kingdom more exemplary than in the period immediately subsequent to the reformation, when these doctrines were taught in their greatest purity; nor were they ever more loose and profligate than at this day. Were the Gospel again generally taught, and faithfully received, we should once more become *a people fearing God, and working righteousness; a people zealous of good works.* Our prisons would no longer be thronged with felons; our highways would no longer swarm with robbers and assassins; nor would the honoured guardians of our laws be compelled perpetually to whet the sword of justice, and mark her progress with blood. The
social

social and relative duties would be scrupulously and chearfully discharged. The rights of society would be respected; and the magistrate would be revered as *sent by God for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

These great and desirable ends would be pursued with greater prospect of success, if the heads of families would second the endeavours of the clergy. The influence of domestic government is greater than is generally conceived. The force of natural affection, joined to that of natural authority, gives unspeakable weight to parental admonition; and thousands have acknowledged through life, with pious gratitude, the benefits they derived from early tuition and example.

It cannot be unseasonable, on this occasion, to recommend to the protection and encouragement of all benevolent Christians a late truly pious and humane institution, whose object is to instruct and reclaim the children of careless or indigent parents. These wretched infants, destitute of the blessing of parental instruction, and (as it would seem) of parental tenderness and affection, abandoned to idleness and ignorance, and their inseparable attendant vice, seem to be in peculiar danger of *perishing for lack of knowledge.* Let them be urged and allure, if possible, let them even be *compelled* to lay hold on the charitable hand which is extended to rescue them from these deplorable evils, It is something to redeem from profanation part of that day which the laws of God and of our country have consecrated

secreated to the divine worship: Nor can those sacred hours be more consistently employed, nor the interests of national virtue and religion better consulted, than by the truly benevolent endeavour to instil into tender minds those principles and maxims which alone can render men acceptable servants of God, or useful members of society.

From the author the Rev. T. Leigh
1790.

[31]

Subscription Charity School

1788

2 CORINTH. VIII. 9.

"For ye know the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST,
that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became
poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

IN all the exhortations of St. Paul to the Christians of the various churches planted or visited by him, whether addressed to them in person or by epistle, we cannot but observe a wonderful brevity, simplicity, and pertinency. Whatever doctrine is to be established, whatever duty enforced, not a single argument, nay scarcely a single word does he employ which could have been omitted without leaving his reasoning obscure, or destitute of that force and cogency which it is on all occasions allowed to possess. And it is particularly to be remarked, that when he is recommending universal integrity and rectitude of conduct, or inculcating the practice of any particular grace or duty, he never grounds his persuasions on the beauty and dignity of virtue in general, or of the peculiar virtue in question, on the fitness of things, on the happy influence of moral conduct on society at large, or on its aptitude to promote their own honor and happiness.

ness in particular; but always on arguments drawn from the doctrines of that holy faith which they professed, arguments of which he expected them to acknowledge the force, only as they were Christians. Such as the command or the example of CHRIST himself; the utter inconsistency of sin with their Christian profession; its tendency to dishonor the name of their GOD and SAVIOUR; to injure the peace or prosperity of his church, or to impede the propagation of his glorious Gospel.

Would he inculcate on the Corinthians an attention to the self-denying duties, and a spotless purity of life? His argument is, that *they are the temples of the HOLY GHOST, that they are not their own, but are bought with a price, and must therefore glorify GOD in their bodies, and in their spirits, which are his.* Are the Ephesian fervants to be exhorted to diligence and fidelity towards their masters? He commands them to *be obedient to them as unto CHRIST, as his servants, with good will, doing service, as to the LORD and not to men.* Would he recommend to his beloved Philippians the spirit of meekness and humility? *Let this mind, saith he, be in you which was also in CHRIST JESUS, who being in the form of GOD, yet was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Does he wish to excite the Colossians to heavenly mindedness? *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD.* Would he exhort them to patience and forgiveness of injuries? *Forbearing one another and forgiving one*

one another, even as CHRIST forgave you, so also do ye. Did the Thessalonians abandon themselves to immoderate sorrow for their departed friends? It is thus that he endeavours to rouse and to console them: *Sorrow not as others which have no hope, for if we believe that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in JESUS will GOD bring with him.* Is Titus to be instructed to enforce universal uprightness of life and conversation both by his doctrine and his example? The grand motive is thus propos'd to him: *In all things shew thyself a pattern of good works, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.* For the grace of GOD that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great GOD, and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

But these observations cannot in any instance be better exemplified than in the subject before us. About twenty-seven years after the crucifixion of our LORD, the necessities of his indigent members in Judea called loudly for relief from their more opulent brethren. The newly planted Christian churches in Macedonia and Galatia made liberal contributions for their support. The disciples at Corinth too, either at the instance of St. Paul, or of their own spontaneous motion, had determined to make collections for the same benevolent purpose; but their first zeal in this cause seems to have cooled and abated; and the Apostle seems to have been apprehensive

that their intended contribution would be too long delayed. In order to re-kindle their ardor, and to expedite the completion of this pious and charitable work, throughout this and the following chapter, with great delicacy and admirable address, he endeavours to stir up in them a holy emulation, by setting before them the example of the generous and humane, though poor Macedonians. Not that he wished to excite them to an ostentatious display of greater wealth, or greater munificence than others possessed; but rather to fervent prayer, that they might be endued with an equal measure of divine grace: for it is not to any superior liberality or benevolence of their natural disposition, but to *the grace of God bestowed on them*, and enabling them *first to give themselves to the LORD*, and then to dedicate their possessions to his service, that St. Paul attributes the extraordinary exertions of the Macedonians in behalf of their distressed brethren in Judea, as you will perceive by reading the preceding part of the chapter.

But though the Apostle avails himself of the example of other churches to quicken the diligence of his Achaian disciples, yet neither in the first epistle to the Corinthians (in which the collection here alluded to is first mentioned) nor in this, does he employ any argument to enforce the practice of charity but that which the text contains. He declares it unnecessary, with respect to them, to insist on the duty as a positive command of God. *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our*

LORD

LORD JESUS CHRIST, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich: that is, if ye love him in sincerity, as believing that great and stupendous instance of his grace, ye will need no command or other motive to abound in charity towards his people: but ye will feel a holy jealousy and indignation against yourselves, if others should outstrip you in this most unequivocal mark of attachment to his person and his cause.

The sufferings of the brethren in Judea struggling sometimes with famine, sometimes with persecution, and sometimes labouring under the united pressure of both, (afflictions which were brought upon them by their steady adherence to the same glorious cause the Corinthians themselves were engaged in, and which therefore might probably in a short time overtake them too) the beauty, the equity, the expediency of mutual benevolence, and its tendency to promote the best temporal interests of society, these were subjects on which the Apostle might have exerted with advantage and with effect the strong rhetorical talents which he appears both by his epistles and his orations to have possessed in no common measure: by ably touching these strings he might have commanded the master springs of their souls, and engaged on the side of humanity the best and most amiable passions of the human heart; but he disdained to address himself to their unsanctified affections, or to be indebted for the success of his exhortations to any but Christian motives. In all his undertakings the love of CHRIST constrained

him, and he inculcates on his spiritual children no other principles of action than those by which he himself was so eminently actuated.

Neither does he endeavour to excite them to minister to the necessities of the saints by telling them that a liberal distribution of alms will atone for the sins of their lives. In what essential point does this preposterous sentiment differ from the absurd and justly exploded Romish doctrine of purchased pardons and indulgences? An opinion more fatally erroneous than this, or more contrary to the whole current of the Gospel, never entered into the head or heart of man: for it is clear from the whole tenor of scripture that nothing but the all-meritorious sacrifice of CHRIST's blood can possibly expiate in whole or in part the least violation of God's righteous law. If it be founded on the text *Charity shall cover the multitude of sins*, we shall see how absurdly that passage is misinterpreted and perverted, by recurring to the 10th chap. of Proverbs, whence it is quoted by St. Peter; and more fully by examining the 13th chap. of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which it is declared that a man may *bestow all his goods to feed the poor and yet be destitute of charity*, and consequently be *nothing profited* by his alms. It is true that the Gospel speaks of a reward to be bestowed in the life to come for humane and benevolent actions; and the acquittal or condemnation of men at the last day is represented by our SAVIOUR himself as turning on the performance or the neglect of practical charity in this life: but we must carefully observe first, that

that the very idea of a reward is distinct from and opposite to that of a stipulated hire or salary which the workman is intitled to demand; and that if it were possible for us to do *all that is commanded*, we are enjoined to acknowledge that this perfect obedience is no more than what God hath a right to exact from us, and therefore to call ourselves *unprofitable servants*; and consequently whatever reward God shall be pleased to bestow on our poor services must be *not of debt but of grace*. And secondly, we must observe that the actions to which such rewards are promised are always supposed in scripture to spring from the only acceptable motive, the love of Christ. *Whosoever shall receive one such little one in my name receiveth me.* *Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward:* consequently these rewardable charities are incompatible with the habitual and wilful commission of sin. But if a man shall with horrible presumption attempt to make a compromise with his Judge, purporting that the sinner shall purchase by his alms a right to persist in his crimes, and that God in consideration of that purchase shall tolerate his offences; if the unjust extortioneer shall retain his fraudulent gains and by virtue of his maxim that *charity covereth the multitude of sins*, shall hold himself excused from making restitution; if the voluptuous man in right of his alms shall conceive himself entitled to lead a life of sensuality, and shall die under the influence of such maxims, and in the practice which naturally results from them, he will find himself in the end miserably defrauded of his money and his salvation too. “Great God!” exclaims

claims an eminent French Protestant Divine, “ are these the ideas which we form of thy majesty? If such be the principles of our virtues what must be those of our vices? Shall we attempt to blind by bribes and presents those all seeing eyes in *whose sight the heavens are not clean?* and attempt to make GOD himself the accomplice of our crimes?”

Still less does St. Paul urge as a motive to the practice of charity what we have been told, (incredible as it may seem) even from the pulpit, that it will compensate for errors in faith. This sentiment, disguised in the semblance of candor and liberality, has in the present age well nigh fapped the foundations of Christianity: and he who by his writings or his preaching affords it the least countenance is but a false and hollow friend to the doctrines of revelation. It sets the Pagan the Deist and the Christian on a level; it puts *asunder those things which God hath joined together*, the faith and practice of a Christian, and declares that *grapes may be gathered of thorns, and figs of thistles*: it annihilates the sin of *chusing darkness rather than light*, and of *making God a liar by refusing to believe the record which he hath given of his son*: it gives the lie to his word who declares a steady affiance in CHRIST to be indispensably necessary to salvation, saying at one time *without faith it is impossible to please God*, and at another *there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they may be saved but only the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST*. Every dogma and every narrative contained in the New Testament militates against this senseless and dangerous

ous

ous persuasion. When the *prayers and alms of the devout Centurion ascended as a memorial before GOD*, if these had been sufficient for his justification, why was it necessary that Peter should be commissioned to tell him words whereby he and his house should be saved, namely that through the name of JESUS, who-soever believeth in him should receive remission of sins? When the trembling Jailor at Philippi, in the agony of conviction demanded of St. Paul, *what must I do to be saved?* why did not the Apostle say, “Thy belief indeed as a heathen is erroneous and contrary to the revelation of GOD given of old to the fathers by the prophets, and in these latter days to us by his SON; nevertheless in future treat thy prisoners with humanity, and give *alms of such things as thou hast*, and the charity of thy practice shall atone for the errors of thy faith? St. Paul knew that his LORD had summed up the whole purport of his Gospel in this sentence, *He that believeth shall be saved:* He knew that faith in CHRIST would as necessarily work by love, as a good tree would bring forth good fruit: he therefore answers his penitent in the very words of his blessed Master, *Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST and thou shall be saved.*

Nay the heathenish and pernicious opinion I am combating will be inevitably productive of a loose and relaxed morality: for every scheme of religious persuasion necessarily includes in itself a system of moral obligation; and if it be established, on any principle whatsoever, that men are at liberty to reject the revelation of GOD, and to frame or chuse their own creed, every man will certainly

certainly chuse such an one as shall favour his own particular propensities and defend and justify his own particular practice, and set him at ease in the indulgence of his appetites so far as he can gratify them without incurring temporal inconvenience.

St. Paul then, addressing himself to men who were followers of the L^RORD JESUS *in sincerity*, rejects all these superfluous, these false and pernicious arguments, and sets before them one only motive to call forth their charity into action, namely the love of CHRIST. This he urges as the noblest, the most affecting, the most efficacious motive, and that which alone could render their gifts acceptable in the sight of GOD.

Ye know the grace of our L^RORD JESUS CHRIST, that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor. He was rich in glory, power and happiness, for we are told that in the beginning he was with God, and was God: in the language of St. Paul God over all blessed for ever: in the language of a creed which the whole Christian church hath adopted “God of the substance of his Father begotten before all worlds.” Rich in the absolute possession of all the incommunicable attributes of Deity: neither needing, nor being capable of addition to his felicity from any other being: supremely happy in the contemplation of his own glorious perfections: yet with divine complacency beholding them reflected in his works. For we learn that He it was who in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and that the heavens with all their hosts were the work

work of his hands: glorious in the praises and adorations of millions of pure and spiritual beings whom he had spoken into existence; the theme of the celestial songs of angels, the object of the burning devotions of the radiant Seraphim. He was one of the Three Persons united in the Divine Essence who condescended to meet in council on the creation of man; all the beauty and riches of nature were at his command: her laws, being established by his word, were always at his controul; for it is written that *by him and for him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth: and he is before all things and by him all things consist.*

Thus rich was our LORD JESUS CHRIST. But oh ! how poor was man ! He was *created indeed in the image of God.* Endowed with every mental and corporeal perfection of which spirit united to matter is capable. Blessed with the favor of his creator, pure and innocent, and consequently happy: armed too with all the wisdom and power which were requisite to maintain him in this blessed state :

“ Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.”

But by his lamentable revolt from GOD, how was he despoiled of these invaluable riches ! From that moment the favor of his maker was lost. He became obnoxious to death natural, spiritual and eternal: and his nature being corrupted by sin, his posterity necessarily became heirs of his wickedness and his misery, *for who, saith Job, can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.* The outward blessings which nature had on all sides showered around him were forfeited.

The very elements became hostile to him: the air breathed disease around him: the fruits of the earth, obtained with pain and toil, while they seemed to support secretly undermined his vital powers, and ensured while they retarded the execution of the sentence pronounced on him. The inferior animals, once subject to his command, united in the general enmity of creation against the rebel to his God: the savages of the forest roared defiance against him, and the most contemptible insects persecuted and annoyed him. His own follies and luxuries combined with the universal malignity of nature against him. Subject to pain, malady and violence, this once happy creature, though he trembled at the idea of death, yet often languished for its approach, as a deliverer from the miseries which oppressed him.

But how much more dreadful was the change which passed upon his mind. His understanding was clouded and obscured. His will was perverted and enslaved. His affections were corrupted and born away with irresistible propensity to the immediate cause of his misery sin. His breast became the seat of every malevolent and self destroying passion, pride, envy, hatred, avarice, sensuality and above all unbelief. So effectually was his *foolish heart darkened* that he became capable of denying the misery of his condition; of asserting the competency of his reason for the discovery of theological truth; of boasting of the dignity and the moral rectitude of his nature: or, if he acknowledged some degree of guilt and obnoxiousness

obnoxiousness to the divine displeasure, of conceiving that he himself could remove it by absurd and superstitious rites, or by the practice of what he called moral virtue: and when God in infinite condescension and mercy announces to him an all-sufficient remedy for the evils under which he labours, he is found capable of proudly rejecting this remedy: of reprobating his revelation as absurd and incredible, because it involves some points which surpass the comprehension of his own limited and benighted understanding: and of blasphemously pronouncing the scheme of redemption to be incompatible with the wisdom and the justice of the ALMIGHTY. In this state of things, man, to complete his misery, was necessarily subject to the wrath and curse of God. The divine equity, holiness and veracity stood engaged to inflict the sentence of eternal death on the whole offending race; nor could the divine mercy interpose in their favour unless a ransom should be found.

Such is the condition by nature of every child of Adam. *If the God of this world have not blinded his eyes,* an examination of his own heart may convince every man of the truth of it. He who denies this doctrine, denies it in defiance of scripture, reason and experience. Upon no other plan but on the doctrine of original sin, or a lapse of mankind from the purity and perfection in which our first father was created, can we account satisfactorily for the natural and moral evil which desolates the world; upon no other principle can we reconcile with the mercy and justice of God

the miseries which man suffers from man, or the calamities, the diseases, the deaths that surround him.

To deliver us from this complicated misery the text informs us that *our LORD JESUS CHRIST became poor*. *Being in the form of GOD*, saith our Apostle, in another place, *he made himself of no reputation*, or, as it is worded in the Greek, *he emptied himself*—divested himself for a time of the majesty and riches of his Godhead, and laid aside, as to the nature which he put on, his equality in dignity with the FATHER—and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man. He took upon him all the misery of our most calamitous nature: he assumed a body liable to the same infirmities, pains and maladies with ours, and a reasonable human soul, capable of sympathizing and feeling the afflictions of the body as well as its own. *Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself took part of the same*. If we consider his poverty in the obvious and outward sense of the word, we shall find it extreme. Of the various conditions of human life his was the most needy and helpless. He voluntarily made choice of the most resourceless indigence. So poor was he that he *had not where to lay his head*. His followers, needy as they were, ministered to him of their substance, and he was sometimes necessitated to work a miracle, to supply the cravings of nature. *In all things he was made like unto us, sin only excepted*. Nay in the sense of imputation he took upon him our sin too. This was the great end of the humiliation to which he submitted. For the *Lord laid upon*

upon him the iniquities of us all. He was bruised for our iniquities and wounded for our transgressions, and his soul was made an offering for sin. Herein chiefly consisted his poverty and wretchedness, that as our representative he was deprived of the favor, and stood the mark and object of the vengeance of God. When he found his three favourite apostles, instead of sympathizing with him in those agonies which rendered his soul sorrowful even unto death, sleeping in the garden; when he found himself betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, and deserted in his extremity by all, these afflictions, though cutting in the extreme to a mind susceptible of the tenderest friendship, what were they to the sufferings he endured on the cross, when in the midst of the most dreadful torments of soul and body, he complained that his God forsook him too : Behold and see, all ye that pass by, if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow, where-with the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger!

But what was the end and object of this extreme poverty and misery submitted to by him who was and is most high in the glory of God the FATHER? The Apostle answers, it was that *Ye through his poverty might be rich. Through his poverty!* Therefore there was no other way. It has been thought presumptuous to assert that God had no mercy but in JESUS CHRIST : that he could not consistently with his justice and holiness pardon sinners without an atonement. But whatever God might or might not have done, the scripture positively and uniformly declares that *the new and living way into the holiest is consecrated for us only*

only through the *vail of his flesh*—that he is exclusively the way, the truth, and the life, and that no man cometh unto the Father but by him: and we may surely argue without presumption from the infinite value of this mysterious sacrifice, that no inferior offering could have been accepted: that he who was *God over all* would never have been *made man*; he who was *blessed for ever* would never have become *a curse*, if in any other way the justice of the Father could have been satisfied, or his anger appeased.

And what are the riches which his poverty purchased for us? Not the riches of this world. They who possess these in the greatest abundance are often poorest in the sight of God. The low estimate He makes of wealth, appears by his bestowing it frequently on the weakest and worst of men: and indeed, except in the hands of such as have grace to dedicate it to the service of God, it is a dangerous and fatal snare. But *he became poor that we might be rich in the favor of God*. *Heirs of the righteousness which is by faith*. *Heirs according to the hope of eternal life*. *Heirs of the kingdom he hath promised*. *Heirs of God*: *Joint heirs with JESUS CHRIST*. His poverty hath purchased to those who believe in his name an interest in whatever he hath done and suffered, in whatever he is and hath to bestow: in his life, and in his death: in his righteousness, or that perfect obedience he paid to the law in their stead and for their justification: in the satisfaction made by his blood to divine justice, whereby the wrath of God is so perfectly appeased toward them that *there is now no condemnation*

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; in the immortality ascertained by his resurrection, in the gifts he received for men, when he ascended up on high and led captivity captive; in the sanctifying and enlightening influences of the HOLY GHOST the COMFORTER whom he sent down on his disciples, by whom he hath promised to be with his people always even unto the end of the world, by whom they become rich in good works and in all the graces and fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; in the intercession he makes continually before the throne of God; and in the eternal glory and felicity of which, as their forerunner and in their name, he hath taken possession at the right hand of God for ever. All things saith the Apostle are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

It remains that we apply the doctrine contained in the text to the purpose for which the Apostle wrote it, and for which we have chosen it as the subject of your meditation this day. Far be it from the ministers of the Gospel to insult your understandings by endeavouring to persuade you that the outward act of alms-giving can atone for sin: far be it from them to deceive and betray your souls by teaching that it can compensate for the want of true and lively faith in your REDEEMER. It is from that faith alone that we draw our arguments for the practice of the tenderest, the most exalted, the most diffusive charity. And what argument so noble, so affecting, so compulsive

pulsive can be found? The generous contempt of money, the tender sympathy with the woes of others which seem to be interwoven in the very constitutions of many persons, are amiable in themselves, and are made by over ruling providence to conduce to the good of society: but how great, how beneficent are their effects, when they are enlarged, refined, and directed to their proper objects by that grace which can encrease them where they are, and create them where they are not. If ye indeed *know experimentally the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, ye cannot forget that he hath shewn such condescending attention even to your temporal welfare that he hath made your benevolence to each other the test of your affection to himself: that he hath commended the poor to you as the representatives of himself. In as much as ye have ministered to one of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.* These words present as it were before your eyes him who was rich in divine majesty, supplicating your assistance and asking alms from you for whose sakes he became poor that ye through his poverty might be rich. This argument is lost upon them who acknowledge not their wretched and desperate condition through original and actual sin: it is lost upon them who deny the Divinity of their SAVIOUR, and by consequence the atonement and satisfaction made by him; and while these essential doctrines of Christianity are generally decried, it is no wonder that charity is at so low an ebb. But they who acknowledge with St. Paul, *herein GOD commendeth his love towards us, that while we were yet sinners CHRIST died for us, and that it was GOD who purchased his church with his own blood,*

blood, will feel the energies of love and gratitude irresistibly inciting them to do their utmost for his suffering children for his sake. They will ask what shall we render to the **LORD** for all the benefits which he hath done unto us? What condescension can men of the most exalted rank shew to the meanest of their fellow worms comparable to that by which the mighty **God** stooped to the condition of humanity? Can we suffer for our brethren any affliction equal to what he endured in our behalf? Can we rescue them from indigence which bears any proportion to the poverty from which he hath delivered us? Can we confer on them any benefit worthy to be named with the riches he hath purchased for us? It is for want of these principles, that, although **God** hath done so great things for us, we think him repaid, we even presume to consider him as indebted to us, if after having provided largely, not for our necessities, but for our pleasures, our luxuries, our sumptuous apparel, our pompous equipages, our frivolous amusements, we bestow the pitiful gleanings of our wealth on the poor whom he recommends to our protection, and in whose welfare we ought to be interested from the sympathy of a common nature without any other motive.

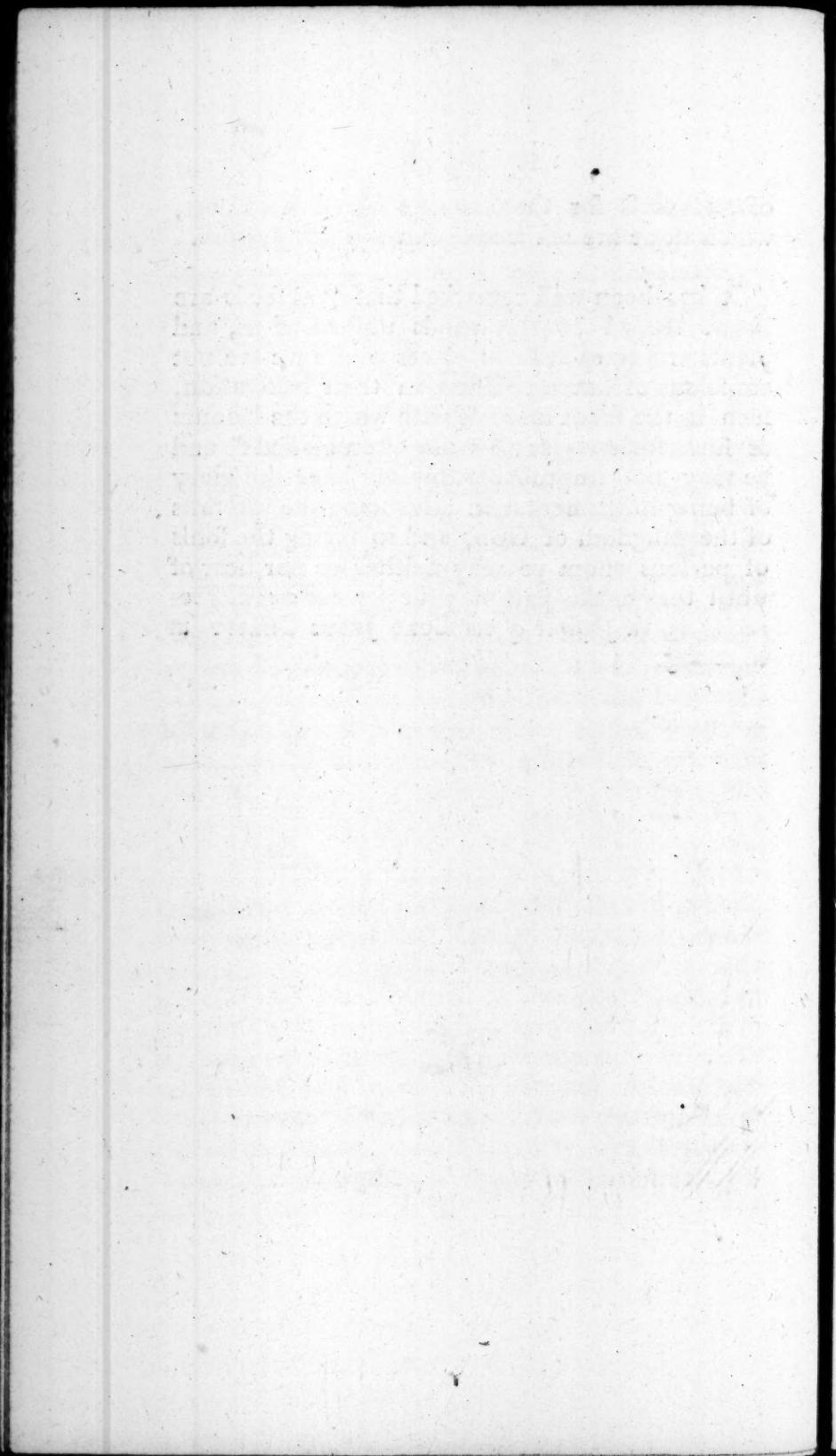
The arguments which furnish such glorious incentives to charity in general, will be found to plead with peculiar force in favor of that branch of it which solicits your attention this day. Common alms may keep famine from the doors of the poor, may appease the hunger and quench

the thirst of their children ; but their happiness in maturer life and the more important concern of their everlasting well-being cannot be so effectually provided for as by their early institution in religion. Common alms may be extorted from you by importunate and fictitious tales of distresses : but whatever ye may this day bestow from motives so pure and so exalted as those which have been now pressed on you, cannot be misapplied. The protection of this institution is committed to upright and respectable persons who are vigilant to remark and anxious to amend if possible all the defects of it. The public supporters of the charity look up to you for assistance and support. To you the helpless orphan stretches his hands ; to you the destitute widow, and the laborious but indigent father lift their eyes glistening with tears of gratitude for your past favours, and beaming with confidence in the perpetuity of your bounty. They beseech you by the tender ties of humanity, by their own oppressive necessities and distresses ; they implore you by your zeal for the glory of God, they conjure you by the example and for the sake of your SAVIOUR to protect, to support, to instruct them. The knowledge of letters, one of the most important gifts of God to the children of men, is necessary not merely to their maintenance, promotion and prosperity in more advanced life, not merely to their utility as members of the community, but to their participation in those blessings which yourselves as Christians enjoy ; to the training of them up as heirs of the kingdom of heaven ; to the opening of

of an access for them to the sacred scriptures, which alone are able to make them wise unto salvation.

It has been well remarked that “as seeds are borne abroad by the winds unseen of us, and plants and trees arise in places where we are not conscious of having assisted in their cultivation, such is the silent increase with which the labours of such societies as this are often blessed:” and ye may not improbably this day have the glory of being instrumental in advancing the interests of the kingdom of God, and in saving the souls of persons whom ye may neither see nor hear of until they make part of your joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our **LORD JESUS CHRIST at his coming.**





From the Author of the *History of
the English Church*
1790.

[53]

XIV. JOHN 27.

" Not as the world giveth give I unto you."

THE progress and establishment of Christianity in the world has been frequently and justly considered as a continued and perpetual miracle; as an evidence in its favor no less convincing than the striking prodigies by which its DIVINE AUTHOR appealed not only to the reason, but to the very fenses of men in confirmation of his celestial mission. The strength of the argument seems to me to lie principally in this, "that the Gospel, instead of addressing itself to the natural passions or worldly interests of men, declares open war against both."

The system of Paganism, which overspread the earth before the revelation of truth by JESUS CHRIST, was abundantly indulgent to pride, ambition and luxury. By cloathing the very objects of its worship with human passions and frailties, and by proposing as the reward of virtue an Elysium the happiness of which consisted in the same pursuits to which the man was most attached on earth, it gave, as it were, the sanction of religion itself to the gratification of whatever passion

H might

might chance to predominate in each of its votaries.

The religion of Mahomet, (which unhappily raised itself in the East, not on the ruins of pure Christianity, but on a church falsely called Christian, whose foundations were already sapped by the fatal prevalence of the Arian doctrine and of the innumerable petty heresies which branched out from it,) extended itself easily by virtue of the same maxims and principles. The natural propensities of men were scarce checked or thwarted by any of its precepts; by most of them they were flattered and encouraged. The command to spread their faith, and to convert the neighbouring nations by the sword was sufficient to recommend it to a martial people enamoured of military glory, addicted to plunder and to every licentious abuse of victory. The single restraint of temperance was abundantly compensated by the promise of a luxurious and sensual paradise: and the positive injunction of frequent prayers, ablutions, fastings and pilgrimages was even sweet in itself to the pride and self-righteousness natural to the heart of man, who is never happier than when he can flatter himself that he merits and purchases the favor and approbation of his maker.

If we inquire into the state of religion at the time of our SAVIOUR's coming, even among the chosen people to whose keeping the oracles of God were committed, we shall find it equally friendly to the natural inclinations and pursuits of men, equally

equally unfavourable to the reception of the pure Gospel of CHRIST. There was then indeed, as at all times, a small remnant of believers, who acknowledged and adored the expected Messiah in his true character, and in his threefold office: But the Jews at large, neither desiring nor feeling their need of a SAVIOUR from sin, figured him to their imaginations as a temporal prince and conqueror, who should wrest the scepter out of Cesar's hand, and transfer the seat of universal empire from the Capitol to the walls of Sion. Although the signs of the times so remarkably corresponded with the predictions of the prophets, that every bosom beat with expectation of the promised seed, yet this expectation raised in their minds no other emotion than that of eager desire for wordly grandeur and prosperity. The sense of the law and of the prophecies they had wrested and distorted, till they seemed to form a system to countenance their absurd prejudices, and to defend their corrupt practice. The nation was divided into two principal sects, of which one absolutely denied the doctrine of a future existence after death; and the other, under colour of extraordinary zeal and rigor, added many ceremonies and duties of their own devising to the positive institutions of the ceremonial law, and by their scrupulous observance of these imagined they expiated before God, or concealed from men, their habitual neglect of the most important moral precepts. The purity of the religion professed by the race of Abraham, how much soever they had corrupted it by their vain traditions, tended in some degree to throw the restraint of outward

outward decency on their actions; and therefore although they were universally addicted to extortion, fraud, oppression, treachery, malice and revenge, we do not learn that they were so openly profligate and debauched as the Gentiles of the same age were. Yet we find among them many flagitious instances of offences against the self-denying duties; and there can be no doubt that the hearts and lives of men were in that, as in other parts of the world, *earthly and sensual as well as devilish.*

Such was the religion and such the morality of the people to whom the revelation of evangelical truth was addressed. But the Divine Promulgator of the Gospel, instead of accommodating his doctrine like the Pagans and Jews of his own day, and like the Mahometans some ages after, to the appetites and the prejudices of men to whom this world was all, gives them fair and open warning that his *kingdom is not of this world.* That the object he has to propose to their ambition is a heavenly kingdom, a pure and spiritual felicity after death. That the road to this kingdom is through *much tribulation.* That far from allowing any indulgence to their carnal and worldly propensities, he requires the sacrifice even of those affections which might seem to them both innocent and laudable. That they must give up all if they would be his disciples. That if they would follow him they must be content to *take up the cross.* That the right hand must be cut off and the right eye plucked out. That violence must be done even to parental and filial tenderneſſ, if either should

should stand in competition with his religion. That the friendship of the world is enmity with God. That he has nothing to promise them in this world but contempt and ignominy, poverty and affliction, persecution and death. He well knew that, according to the maxims of human prudence, this was not the method to gain many proselytes, or cause his religion to triumph over theories so flattering to the corrupt hearts of men. But he knew too that wisdom would be justified of her children; that his word would not return to him frustrated, but would prosper in the work whereunto he sent it, that God would give him the heathen for his inheritance and the utmost parts of the world for his possession; that he should ride on conquering and to conquer, until his kingdom should rule over all.

There are many who seem to imagine that because we at this day are born within the pale of the visible church of CHRIST, because we are in early infancy initiated into her communion, and outwardly profess our assent to her creeds, we of course belong to his invisible church. The Israelites of our Saviour's days were under a similar mistake. They flattered themselves that they had profited by the affliction of their fore-fathers under the Babylonian captivity; and because they were delivered from that yoke, and moreover professed more outward reverence for religion, having collected and adjusted the canon of the sacred writings, and reprobated the impiety of their ancestors by building the monuments and adorning the sepulchres of the martyred prophets, they regarded themselves with

an eye of preference and blindly professed, if we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. But our blessed LORD removes the veil from their eyes, and confutes them by this unanswerable argument, that being actually in similar circumstances they were actually proceeding in the same steps. Thus if we triumph in our fancied superiority over the unhappy Jews and Pagans who rejected Christianity at its first promulgation, a slight examination may convince us that the incompatibility of the Gospel with the corrupt inclinations of the natural heart as fatally prevents the majority of mankind from receiving the truth in the love and power of it, as it did then: and that the truth contained in my text, that our SAVIOUR giveth not as the world giveth, as effectually deters the votaries of the world in this country from desiring or seeking what he hath to give, as it did in the Sanhedrim or in the Areopagus.

The words of the text are part of that beautiful and affecting consolatory discourse in which our blessed REDEEMER endeavours to prepare and fortify the hearts of his afflicted disciples against their approaching separation from their beloved Master. I propose to consider it as a simple proposition or axiom, without reference to the context with which it is connected, or to the occasion on which it was delivered: and, adhering to the letter of the words, to enquire not what our SAVIOUR bestows on his faithful people, or the world on its votaries, but how they give: not

not what is the substance, but what is the effect or consequence of their gifts respectively, and upon what terms they impart them.

And, first, whatever the world has to bestow must be attained with much vexation and fatigue, and at great cost. It cannot in strict propriety be said to give any thing. Its pleasures, its honors, its emoluments must be hardly earned, and dearly bought; even at the expence of our health, our time, our liberty and our conscience. What has avarice, ambition or luxury to impart, for which some or all of these invaluable treasures must not necessarily be bartered? Nay the worldling must constantly sacrifice some favorite objects of his desire to facilitate the attainment of others: wealth must be trucked for pleasure, independence for promotion, ease and leisure for reputation.

Let us examine two pursuits of the men of this world esteemed the most laudable and innocent of all. Contemplate first the candidate for literary fame. Resolute and alert he spreads his sail, to circumnavigate the whole extent, and to explore every region of the world of science. He is called indefatigable and such indeed his undertaking requires him to be. Having measured amazing tracts of philological disquisition, new tracts seemingly immeasurable extend themselves to his astonished view. Having laboured with painful step up the most formidable heights of philosophy, other Alps rise in endless succession before him. The effect of all his acquisitions

in knowledge is to confirm the conviction of his ignorance; the fruit of his most intense labour is the assurance that it is endless. He dies perhaps possessed of the renown of having thrown some light on the idiom, the origin or the pronunciation of an obsolete language: of having formed an ingenious conjecture concerning the date or the subject of an antiquated medal; or, still more glorious! of having discovered some properties hitherto unnoticed of certain geometrical quantities! What price did he pay for this envied this immortal reputation? He banished himself from the comforts and endearments of social life. His health was exhausted by perpetual vigils, his constitution was broken by painful and lingering diseases. He not only destroyed, perhaps, the bodily organs most necessary to the success of his pursuit, but he strained and impaired by constant tension the mental instruments employed in his favorite researches, his imagination, his memory, his judgement. He reduced his understanding below the level of the illiterate vulgar whom he despised: he exhibited in his latter days a melancholy wreck and monument of the frailty of human reason. He died a drolling idiot!

If we may compare a pygmy with this giant, let us oppose to him his greatest contrast, one of the sons of modern dissipation. Averse to the trouble, scarce capable of the exertion of thinking, this frivolous being affects to despise the accomplishments which he despairs to attain. Without any end of business or even of pleasure in view, his mind

mind wearies and exhausts its feeble powers in perpetual efforts to banish reflexion and to lose the consciousness of its own existence. Think not that this *strenuous idleness* is void of pain and labour; the weighty cares and sollicitudes of dress, the task of devising new modes of trifling and childish amusement to murder time and thought are real toil and fatigue to an understanding of this size and complexion. Yet for such considerations he not only sacrifices the esteem of the wife and the approbation of the good, but submits to the contempt and ridicule of worldlings somewhat more active and rational than himself.

Extend these reflexions to the votaries of pleasure, wealth and power, and you will perceive that such satisfactions as this world can give are purchased by them all with servile toil and drudgery, at the expence of all that is truly valuable in this life, and often by the loss of their immortal souls.

The Holy Scripture points out this truth in a variety of passages. *The wages*, (the dearly and laboriously earned wages) of sin is death. *Wherefore do ye spend money* (or as the original more beautifully expresses it, *wherefore do ye weigh out silver*) *for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* Why waste ye solid and precious treasure, your health, your time, your faculties, your eternal well-being, for the fugitive, and unsubstantial trifles of this vain world?

The

The contrast in this respect between what the world gives and what CHRIST gives is so obvious as scarcely to need pointing out. The same passages of Scripture which I have just cited advert to it. “*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Ho! every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat: yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price; hearken diligently unto me and ye shall eat that which is good: and in another place, whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely. Instead of the empty perishing unsatisfactory good which the world offers, at so dear a price, He tenders substantial and salutary food for the soul, and that freely and gratuitously. Nothing is required, but to thirst, to will, to come! to buy without money and without price, not pretending to merit, or presuming to purchase these favors. He who so liberally offers them, purchased them for us at a price “all price beyond”.—We have nothing to do but to relinquish the hollow, unwholesome, unsubstantial food which must cost us so inexpressibly dear, and as needy starving souls to accept of this heavenly feast on the liberal terms on which alone he offers it.

But let us suppose a man to have attained easily and early in life the summit of all earthly prosperity. Still all is uncertain and precarious: all is at the mercy of those endless vicissitudes of which the most solid establishments of this world are the sport: all is transient and fleeth away like a shadow. Dost thou bask in the sunshine of

of court favor? Art thou high in office, and powerful in influence? A secret accusation shall go forth to prevail against thee: the monarch or the favorite shall suddenly frown upon thee: thou shall be degraded from thy illustrious employments and stripped of thy splendid appointments; and the mercenary crowd that seemed yesterday to live but in thy smile, with shameless indifference shall turn their backs upon thee: and hasten to pay their homage to the rising sun. Wast thou nurfed in the lap of fortune, or has thy industry acquired thee wealth and laid thee up much goods for many years? Thy riches shall *make themselves wings and flee away.* A course of prodigality shall consume, or a process at law shall tear from thee thy patrimony: a tempest shall whelm thy ships and thy precious merchandise in the ocean: a hurricane or an earthquake shall desolate thy distant plantation or the enemies of thy country shall waste it with sword and fire. Dost thou inwardly exult in the honest pride of a fair and spotless reputation? A fiend in human shape shall secretly fabricate a tale of infamy against thee, and fasten on thee the guilt of a deed which thy soul abhors. He shall attribute thy most generous actions to the most unworthy motives; he shall insinuate that thy most conspicuous virtues are but specious masks to cover the most infamous vices: he shall artfully combine and perversely interpret the known circumstances of thy life, so as to give colour and plausibility to his assertions. Perhaps thou shall never know thy accuser: but thou shall read his success in the averted eyes and estranged countenances

countenances of those who formerly encountered thee with looks of confidence and esteem: and thy heart, too fondly anxious for the approbation of men whose judgment is liable to error and whose ears are ever open to calumny, shall agonize though conscious of innocence, and wish to break to forget its sorrows. Is thy happiness chiefly centered in social and domestic comforts? These too shall be poisoned, blasted, annihilated. Thy friend shall forsake or betray thee; or a busy and envious whisperer shall sow distrust and alienation between him and thee. Death shall make a lamentable breach in thy family: the partner of thy heart, whose bosom is the repository of all thy joys, thy hopes, thy affections, shall be suddenly torn from thine arms, and stretched a lifeless corps before thee. Or thou shall be made to feel, in the forcible language of the poet " How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." If thou escape all these calamities, severer misfortune shall touch thy person: thy health, thy vigor shall be prematurely blasted; thy youth shall pine in sickness, incapable of tasting or enjoying the blessings that surround thee. If this happen not to thee, yet old age "with stealing steps" creeps unobserved upon thee: the days approach of which thou shall say, *I have no pleasure in them:* and though free from disease and pain, the faculties both of thy mind and body shall be blunt and callous to thy wonted enjoyments: thou shalt lose the relish of life, and yet dread the approach of death. Death, whether early or late shall surely take from thee, all that *this world giveth.* He ever attends thee,

he

he surrounds thee, he inhabits thy very frame. An unwonted quickness or slowness in the pulsation of thy arteries, a trifling augmentation or diminution of heat in the temperament of thy brain may this moment announce his approach. In that case, where, what is all that the world hath given? Even if thou have no stronger reason than the pain of relinquishing its fascinating pleasures, thou wilt wish thou hadst never enjoyed them.

But the happiness which CHRIST gives to his faithful people is certain, permanent, unchangeable as himself. It flourishes equally in youth and in age, in health and in sickness, in prosperity and in adversity, in life and in death. The various blasts of misfortune may overtake the Christian as well as the man of this world, but they whistle harmless over his head. Neither his wealth nor his habitation is in this world. His treasure he hath sent before him into heaven; and the miseries of life shall but quicken the steps by which he hastens to overtake it. His house is built on the rock of ages, and though the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon it, it shall never fall. His hope is founded on the immutable promises of him who cannot lye. What his SAVIOUR hath given him is peace: that peace with GOD which he himself made by the blood of his cross: that peace which passeth all understanding; that peace which as the world cannot give, so it never can bereave him of. It is superior to the fluctuation of all subiunary things; it is unaffected by the vicissitudes of chance and time: it is undisturbed

turbed by the injustice, the violence, the calumnies of men: it is strengthened by affliction, confirmed by sickness, crowned and perfected by death.

A more striking defect in the gifts of the world is that they really tend not to the object which they profess to have in view. Of all the restless pursuits of men the end is happiness. But who ever dared to profess that he had attained this end? During the fatigue of the race we pant for the distant goal, and think full surely that when we arrive there our desire will be crowned. When we have hunted down the prey, we pronounce it worthless in itself, and declare that all the pleasure was in the Chase. Anguish attends disappointment, disgust or satiety waits upon success. A thousand other evils spring necessarily both from our frustrated hopes and from our gratified wishes, whatever shape the phantom felicity assumes and by whatever path we pursue her. Health, fortune or fame is lost: and what is worse, conscience is usually wounded, and remorse embitters the memory of our happiest moments. But, suppose both the object and the means were safe and sinless, yet the experience of the veterans in luxury, ambition and avarice unites to confirm this truth, that there is nothing under the sun which is capable of satisfying the vast capacity and the boundless desire of happiness implanted in all reasonable beings. And this, instead of being a subject of complaint, should be matter of thankfulness; for it is wisely and benevolently ordained, that man may be prompted by

by this instinctive desire of felicity, and by the insufficiency of earthly enjoyments to satisfy it, to fix his affections on those blessings which survive the grave and accompany him into eternity.

But the gifts of CHRIST are, as the gifts of a GOD must necessarily be, fully competent and adequate to the great and glorious end for which they are given. The end for which the Christian asks and for which CHRIST bestows them is happiness: eternal happiness: happiness placed in an object which is infinitely capable of supplying it, and pursued by paths in which none ever sought it in vain. When Solomon asked wisdom of his God, the LORD, pleased with his request, added wealth and power without his entreaty. Thus it happens to the Christian. He asks for happiness in another life, and his SAVIOUR freely bestows upon him a liberal measure of it in this. The enjoyments he aspires to in heaven are anticipated, nay they are begun upon earth. Grace, peace and pardoning love are the clusters of Eshcol, the earnest of the fruits of the promised land on which his faith and his hope regale themselves. No terror or remorse pursues the memory of these pleasures: no craving, unsatisfied void do they leave in the mind. *Hearken unto me, faith CHRIST, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* And again *Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, for the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.* Every event is made to conduce to the great end of the believers eternal welfare. Outward adversity and outward prosperity

perity, both equally fatal to the happiness of the men of this world, make part of the discipline which trains *him* to everlasting felicity. Of inward afflictions he suffers his share: and although these thorns which strew the path of eternal life are most frequently scattered by ourselves, or at least sent by our compassionate REDEEMER to correct the sin, particularly the unbelief of his people, yet these are most eminently made to work together for their good: by strengthening their faith, by exercising their obedience, by subduing their corruptions, by sanctifying and preparing them for their admission into the heavenly kingdom of their LORD in whose presence is fulness of Joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for ever more.

It remains, my friends, that Ye make your election between the gifts of the world and those of CHRIST. *Halt no longer between two opinions;* if the LORD be God follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. Recollect the three great distinctions between the offers of each; and if the God of this world have not blinded your eyes left the light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST who is the image of God should shine unto them, ye will perceive that this very circumstance that your SAVIOUR giveth not as the world giveth, though it have hitherto deterred you, is the argument which above all others ought to induce you to accept his gracious proposals. The terms on which the world tenders its most alluring offers are hard, mercenary, slavish. The propositions of your SAVIOUR are merciful, gracious and liberal. He not only offers freely, but he deigns to invite
and

and intreat, to court and sollicit your compliance. This is well illustrated by the affecting parable of the Prodigal Son. The wretched and scanty subsistence which he received from his hard task-master in a foreign country, was earned by a servile and degrading employment: but when he came to himself, and adopted the salutary resolution of returning to his Father's house, his compassionate parent *betheld him when he was yet a great way off, he ran, he fell on his neck and kissed him;* he lavished on him the marks of that paternal tenderneſs from which he had voluntarily and ungratefully banished himself; he heaped on him unsolicited every article which could suit the necessities of the returning penitent, and which could indicate the magnificent hospitality of a prince, and the affectionate exultation of a father. O! beware lest ye suffer this condescending SAVIOUR to stretch forth his hands and to sollicit in vain. Take heed above all that ye accept his GREAT SALVATION on his own terms as a free, unmerited, finished salvation. If ye presume to think that by your prayers, your alms, your duties ye can purchase the goodlike gift, ye pour contempt upon his grace, and ye trample his blood under foot; for it is written, *Verily if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

Again the gifts of the world are unstable, perishing, transitory. The inheritance held out to you by CHRIST is certain, permanent, eternal. For the truth of the former position we appeal to the daily evidence of your senses, to the personal knowledge of every man who has had the least

least experience of the world. The truth of the latter rests upon the word of GOD, and upon that *faith which is the evidence of things not seen.* The inference to be drawn from hence is a truth so obvious and self evident, that it has presented itself to unenlightened heathens; namely, that it imports us to sit loose and indifferent to the changeable objects of sense and time, and cherish hopes full of immortality. The world doth not even profess to give any thing beyond the grave: ill doth it perform its promises of pleasure and satisfaction in this life; and well are its best enjoyments exchanged for the *possibility* of obtaining what the Gospel holds forth, *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

With equal confidence can I appeal to the experience of those who have proved what the world is, that its most valuable gifts are incompetent to satisfy the longings of an immortal soul. Ye have found them empty, false and hollow. Ye have perhaps changed the object of your pursuit, but the object was still terrestrial, and therefore unsatisfactory. Thus is this deceitful world compelled to bear testimony against itself, and to preach to you that all it can give is *vanity and vexation of spirit:* that its most glorious and solid attainments are *broken cisterns that can hold no water.* Turn ye then to the *fountain of living waters.* Turn to your *Father,* whose servants have *bread enough and to spare,* while ye perish with hunger or feed on *husks with swine.* Chuse that *better part which shall not be taken from you.* CHRIST will give unto you not as the world giveth. He will give you free and gratuitous

gratuitous, certain and permanent, solid and satisfactory joys. He will give himself to you. He hath long since given himself as a *propitiation for your sins*, and he waits and longs to give himself to you as your portion in time and in eternity. *He is made unto them that believe wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption*—every thing on earth that their necessities can require; every thing in heaven that the infinitely extended capacities of their souls can contain.

To him with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT three Persons in one GOD be ascribed all honour and glory, might, majesty and dominion now and for ever. Amen.



